

The UXPin logo is a white square with rounded corners containing the text "UXPin" in a white, sans-serif font. It is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image, within a large purple circle.

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The background is a dark navy blue. A large, vibrant purple circle is positioned in the upper right. Two thick, diagonal purple stripes, one in a lighter shade and one in a darker shade, cross the lower half of the image. The main title is centered within the purple circle.

# **Web UI Trends Present & Future**

The Vibrancy of Color

UXPin

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The Vibrancy of Color

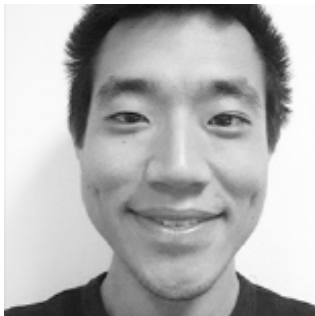
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# “Stealing” From Fashion and Interior Design

Color is common to every website. While the way designers use color changes dramatically based on trends and time periods, 2015 is most definitely the year of vibrant color.

Red, orange, pink and bright green, blue and purple have become the focal point of web design projects across a variety of industries. Designers are pairing bright color choices in a way that was almost taboo a few years ago and even straying from the website color choices dictated by company branding.

The result is a beautiful rainbow of bright, energetic and fun color that, when used well, provides [emotional direction for the design](#) and visually emphasizes on-screen text and graphics. This fearless color scheme isn't for everyone, but the trend is versatile enough where almost any designer can take advantage of using vibrant color – from a full page design with a magenta background to kelly green lettering in a black and white design framework.

The color of the world around us is one of the strongest influences on our choices in web design. In fact, cues from fashion and interior design seem to have an even stronger influence on color trends across all aspects of design.

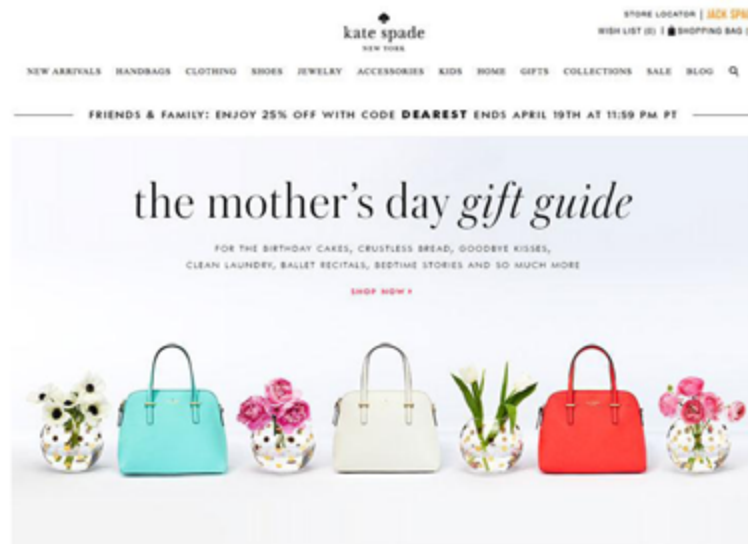


Photo credit: <http://www.katespade.com/>

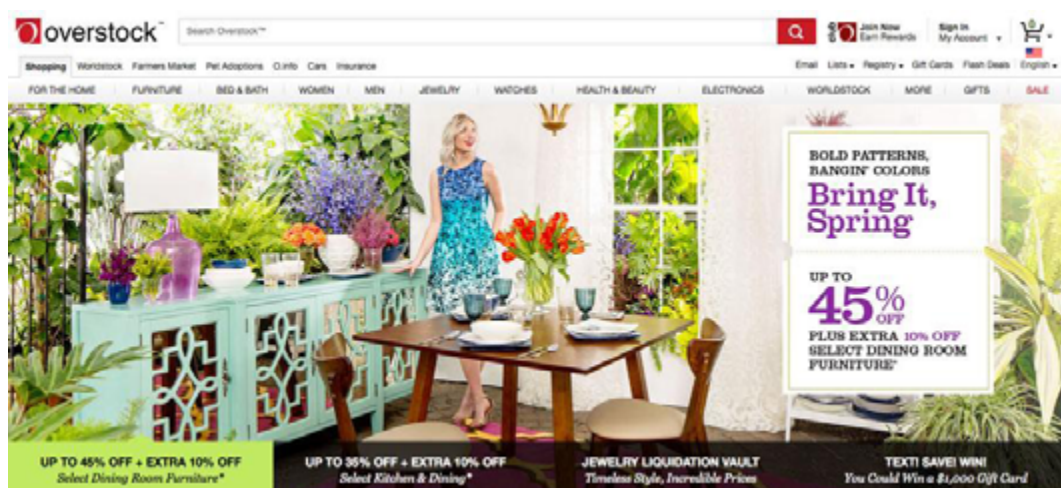


Photo credit: <http://www.overstock.com/>

If you look to the runway and through pages of fashion magazines, color is everywhere. Neons, bold prints and black and white with color accents are the height of fashion. From skirts to bags to polos

and even hair extensions, color blocking (with a pair of bright hues) is near universal. When it comes to your home, color is also a bold choice from wall colors to the cushions on patio furniture.

How color is used in the physical world translates to the digital world as well. As described in *Web Design for the Human Eye*, the goal of all design is to connect with the user – the more relatable the presentation, the likelier (and stronger) the emotional connection. Color trends in the real world and in digital projects are inexplicably linked for this reason – as long as color is a popular trend overall, it will live on for website designers as well.



## Flat Color Palettes

Two major developments ushered in the emergence of vibrant color in web UI design – high definition displays and the [popularity of flat design](#). While flat design likely played the stronger role in expanding the use of color, the technology behind it made the rich hues feasible.

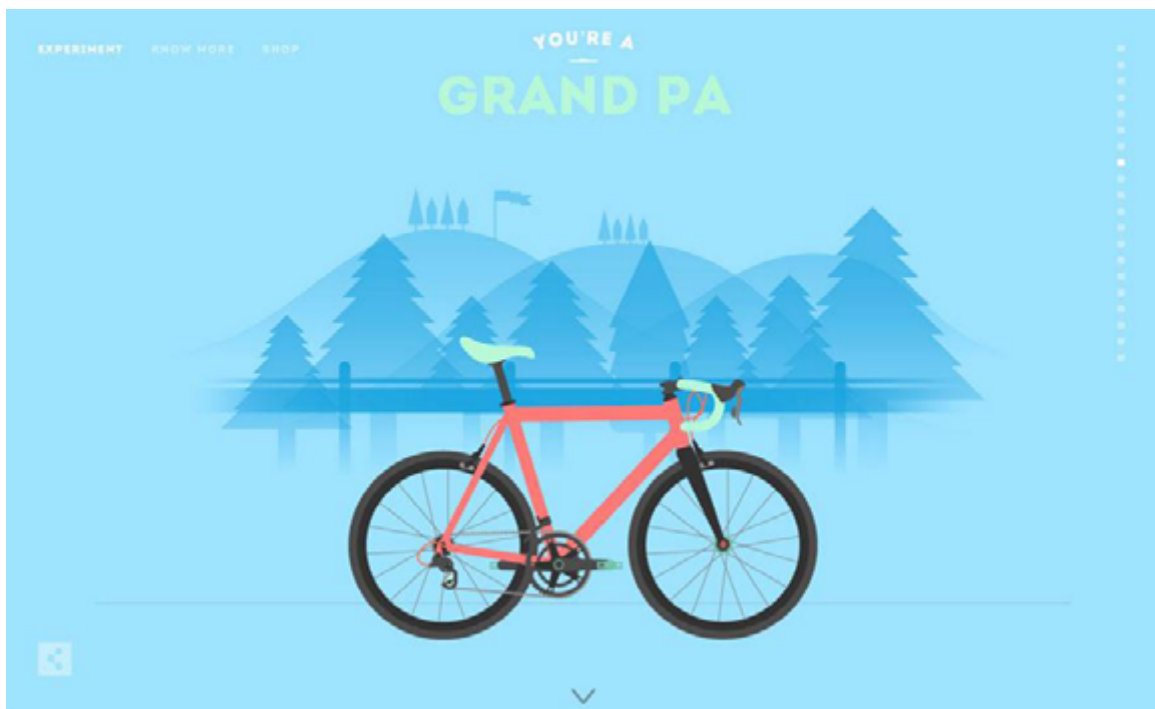


Photo credit: <http://cyclemon.com/>

With more pixels per inch on screens, the digital rainbow has greatly expanded to suit our maturing taste in design aesthetics. Monitors of every size, from desktop displays to the iPhone – can actually render all the color options designers use today.

Designers used to worry about [web safe colors](#) (there were just 216 of them) so that all users could see exactly what the designer intended. That concept is dead and buried – [W3Schools](#) surveyed

users in 2014 and found that more than 98% of users had devices capable of displaying millions of colors, removing technology as a barrier to the creativity of color trends.

Around the same time [Retina](#) and other high definition displays gained popularity, flat design (a trend that is still going strong and [evolving](#)) roared onto the scene. One of the key components of the trend was the abundance of bright color. And while flat outlines were not for everyone, many of the color choices and emotions users felt when interacting with these hues were highly desirable

Flat colors have evolved and toned down as they adapted to a variety of other projects. These bright, deeply saturated hues are often seen in color palettes that include one to three colors (rather than the expansive palettes associated with flat design) or to create a strong accent, contrasting element or focal point.

## Monotone Color Schemes

One of the most popular ways to use vibrant color, monotone color palettes use a single color with a mixture of tints and tones to create a unified yet nuanced visual design.

Vibrant color lends itself to monotone palettes because it allows the designer to use a bold, maybe even unconventional color without trying to match it to other colors. As we all know from the complementary, analogous, and triadic color schemes discussed in [Web Design for the Human Eye](#), choosing multiple colors is one of the most surprisingly complex yet impactful decisions for the web.



Photo credit: <http://www.linequality.com/>

Look at Line Quality, above, as an example.

Lime green is not the easier color to pair tastefully with others, but here the dominance of the color in combination with an image of a

Muppet icon in the same hue creates a highly dramatic visual effect. Because the background and foreground image are all one color, the remaining elements such as the crisp white lettering, the company logo, minimalist navigation and the call-to-action [ghost button](#) are still easy to find on the screen even though they are visually muted in comparison.

Monotone color schemes are one of the easiest and most effective ways to use a lot of color without falling into the design trap or creating a site that feels chaotic (a common issue with vibrantly colored web interfaces). This type of color scheme also allows a company to use colors in ways that might live outside of their traditional branding without worry of matching or issues with [readability](#).

## High Contrast Color

Vibrant color is core to the [minimalist design trend](#) as well. Pops of color provide emphasis and points of entry in stripped-down designs that might otherwise be lacking.

High contrast refers to any color that is very different from the background. In a minimalist context, you're likely to see any form of color with high saturation against a black, white or gray canvas. Points of great contrast become the visual center of the design, telling users where to look at what to do in a framework that may otherwise be too simple.

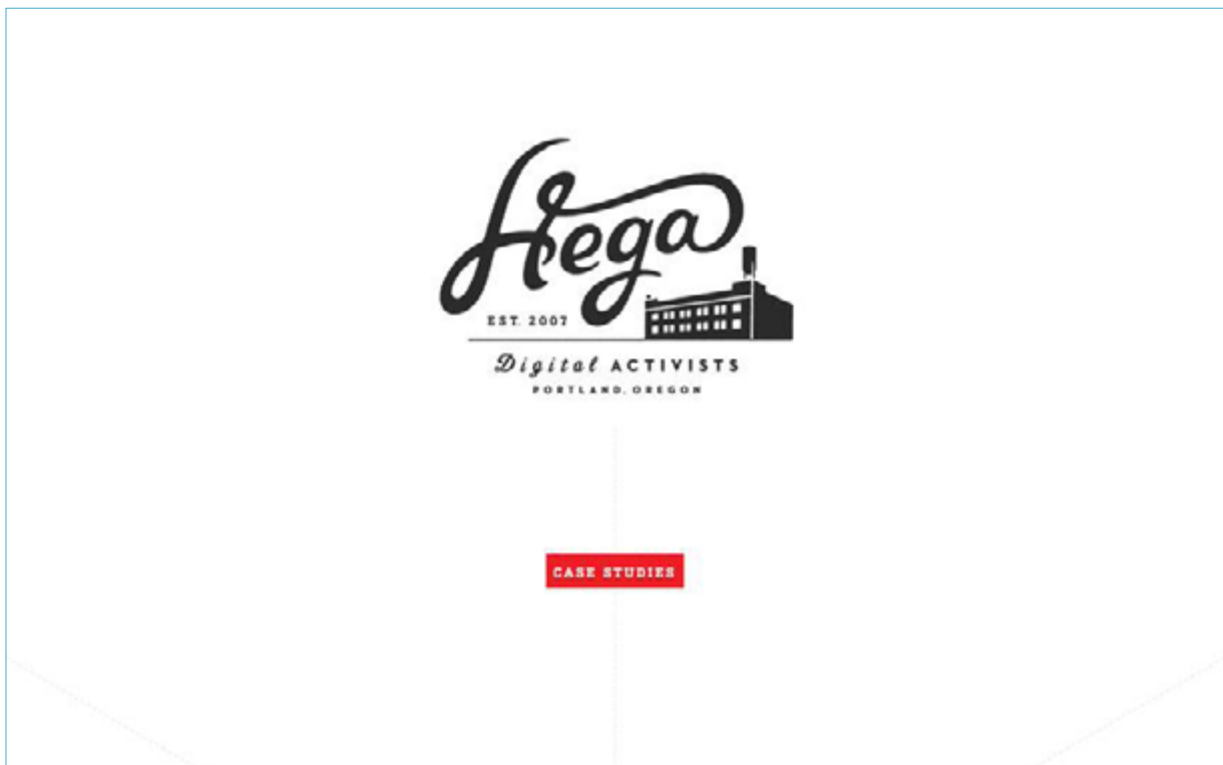


Photo credit: <http://hega.tv/#/home>

[Hega](#) uses color only for a button in a minimalist design framework, which immediately draws the user's attention where the designer

wants. Because the touch of color contrasts with the white background and black image, the “Case Studies” button clearly communicates a call to action without explicitly urge the user to click.



Photo credit: <http://www.studiostylistik.ca/>

Studio Stylistik uses that same concept with strategic teal lettering, buttons and even the jacket on the model for emphasis against a dark background. By using the same color applied in different points that form a zig-zag formation, the site retains a unified look while leading our eyes to each point of interest highlighted in teal.

As you can see, vibrant color isn’t useful just for calling out a single element on the page – you can also create a natural vertical rhythm by repeating in moderation according to the human scanning patterns we described in *Web Design for the Human Eye*.



Photo credit: <http://www.moresleep.net/>

Bold color works so well because it is, by comparison, a complete opposite of the starkness of minimalist design. [More Sleep](#), above, uses color brilliantly against a dark background. The coral red is easy to read and draws attention to the words on the screen first and the image behind it afterward.

The thick red line beneath the headline creates visual balance, which is extremely important considering that red [communicates passion and even violence](#). Again, this is why color can be so tricky: apply too much too strongly, and your design immediately crosses the emotional spectrum and becomes loud and overbearing.

## Color Blocking and Hover

Two vibrant color patterns that emerged thanks to other trends (particularly flat design and [card-style interfaces](#)) are color blocking and colored hover states.

As the names suggest, color blocks refers to dividing content into a grid and applying different colors to create a card-like mosaic. Colored hover states are also quite straightforward – as you mouse over each block of content, the color changes to provide visual feedback to users.

While you can apply the techniques independently (shown below in the great color blocking in the sites for [Wrist](#) and [Play Dot To](#)), you'll actually see the techniques used together quite often.

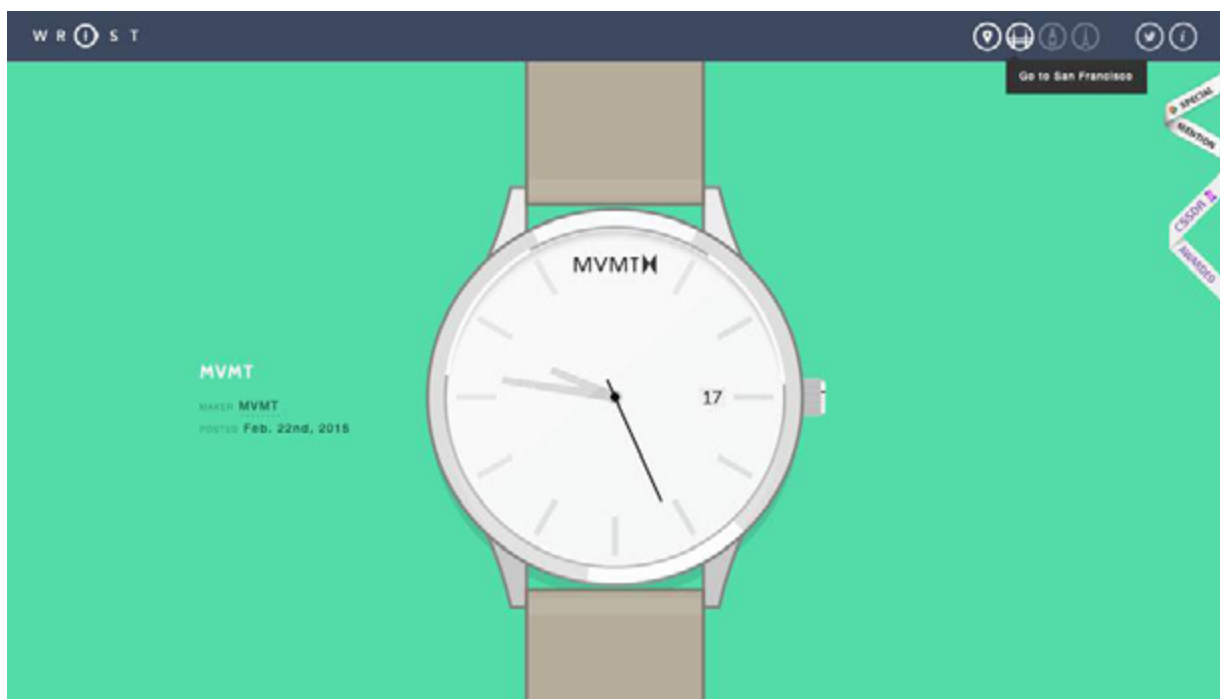


Photo credit: <http://www.wrist.im/>



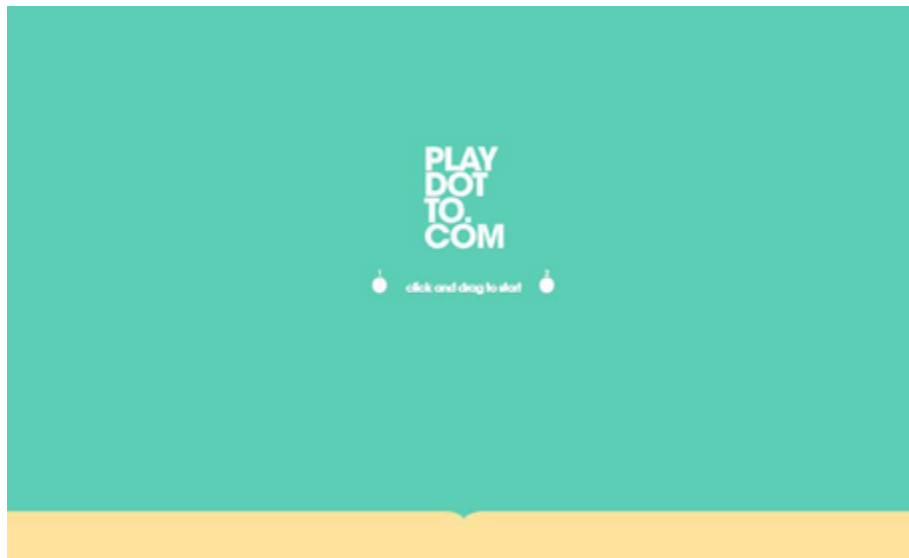


Photo credit: <http://play-dot-to.com/>

Column Five Media and PFD (below) are excellent examples of how bold color pairs well with user interface tools, such as hover states, linking and animated effects. Each site features a somewhat card-style design with hover effects as the user moves from block to block. While Column Five uses color primarily for hover, PFD also uses color blocking to highlight individual blocks within the design that also include hover animation.

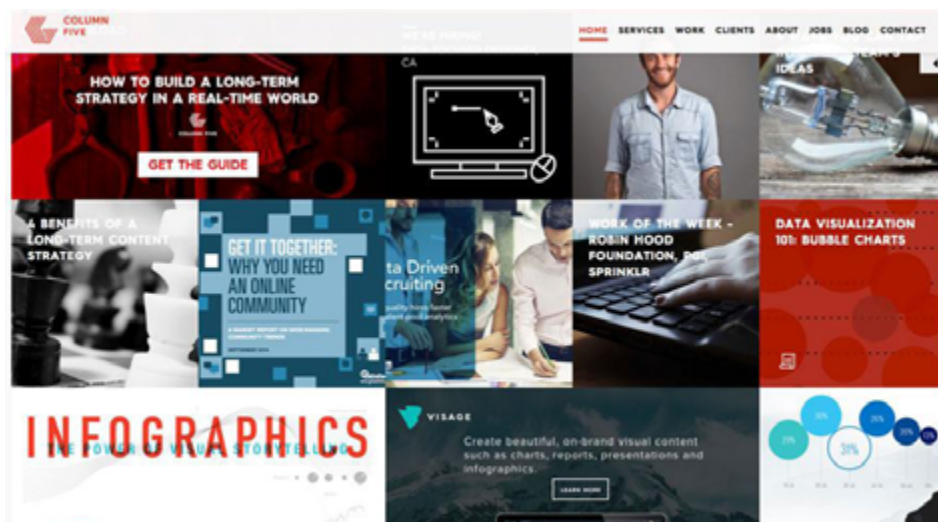


Photo credit: <http://www.columnfivemedia.com/>

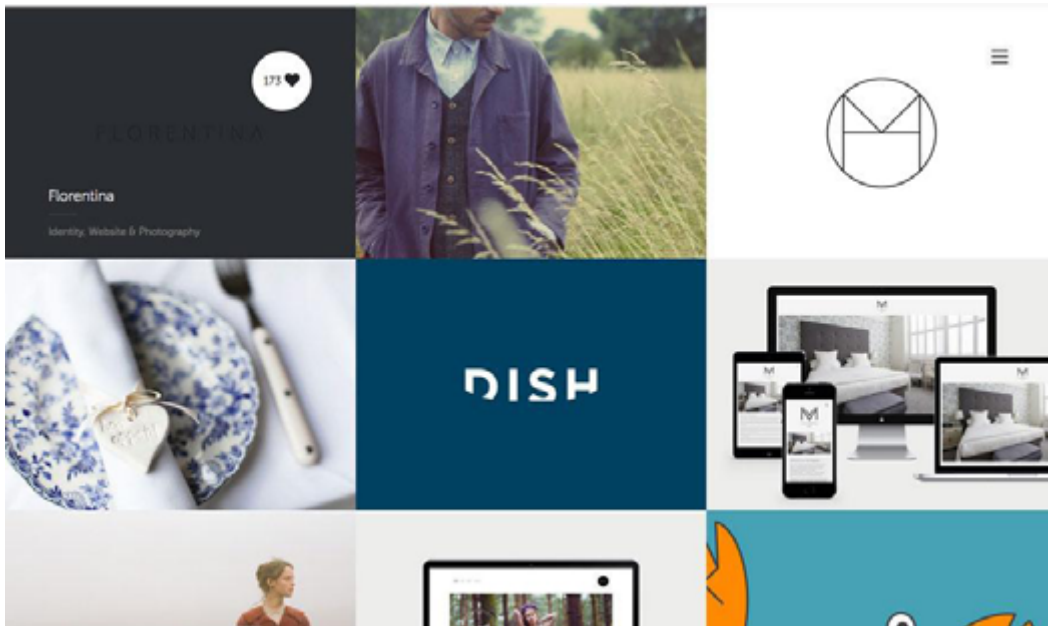


Photo credit: <http://madebypfd.com/>

As you can probably tell, user interaction is the primary motivation behind combining color blocks with colored hover states.

Color doesn't just help users visually distinguish different types of content. When used as a tool for interaction design, animated color is one of the fastest ways to give users a simultaneous feeling of control and delight when engaging with content. Considering [Maslow's hierarchy of design needs](#), any visual treatment that instantly improves usability and adds personality is a powerful tool in your arsenal.

## Pairing Color With Texture

Textures were once reserved for more neutral backgrounds, but designers are pairing bold hues with subtle effects for stunning experiences. As other trends begin to circle back to the use of more subtle effects – like what is happening with [Flat Design 2.0](#) – color will also evolve.

There are two ways to think about vibrant color and texture:

1. As part of an overall background or image
2. As a subtle accent to a background or image



Photo credit: <http://ryankeiser.net/>

[Ryan Keiser's website](#) uses texture and vibrant color together as a dominant background effect.

The grid pattern in the yellow-green canvas offsets what could have ended up as a chaotic color choice. The texture adds more interest and a certain softness to the color that makes it easier read. Bright blue and pink accents (including hover states for links) strengthens the overall message – this designer will bring your vision to life with boldness and color.

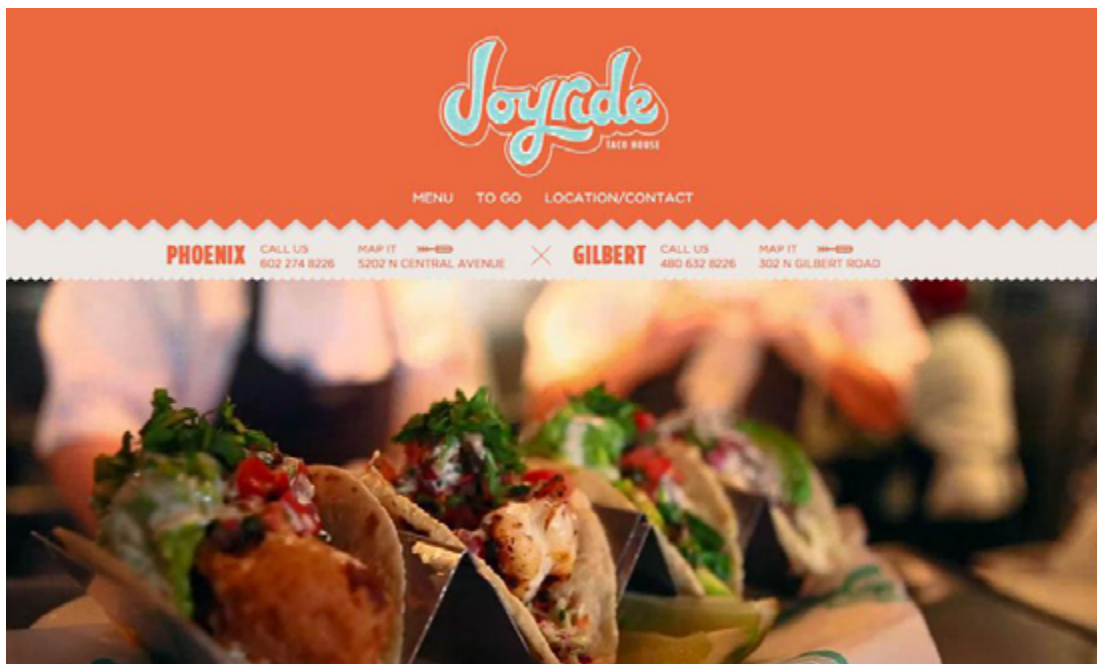


Photo credit: <http://joyridetacohouse.com/>

**Joyride Taco House** combines bold and engaging color with subtle textures.

Between the main header and the contact information, a shadow creates a bit of depth and separation – but what really stands out is the blue-green line art texture in the lettering. The logo texture is engaging, light and fun. The combination of colors (orange and the blue-green) are certainly unexpected, but they perfectly reflect the hip yet casual vibe of the restaurant.

## How to Use Vibrant Color

Vibrant color is a design technique that complements many different design styles. If nothing else, this trend has certainly expanded the creative businesses and website owners who may have previously preferred the safe templated look of most plug-and-play site themes.

The trend started with websites for more creative fields and groups – designers, agencies, music and art – but is gaining popularity for news, weather and health sites as well. Bright color is also finding a place in e-commerce, where black and white was the standard for a long time.

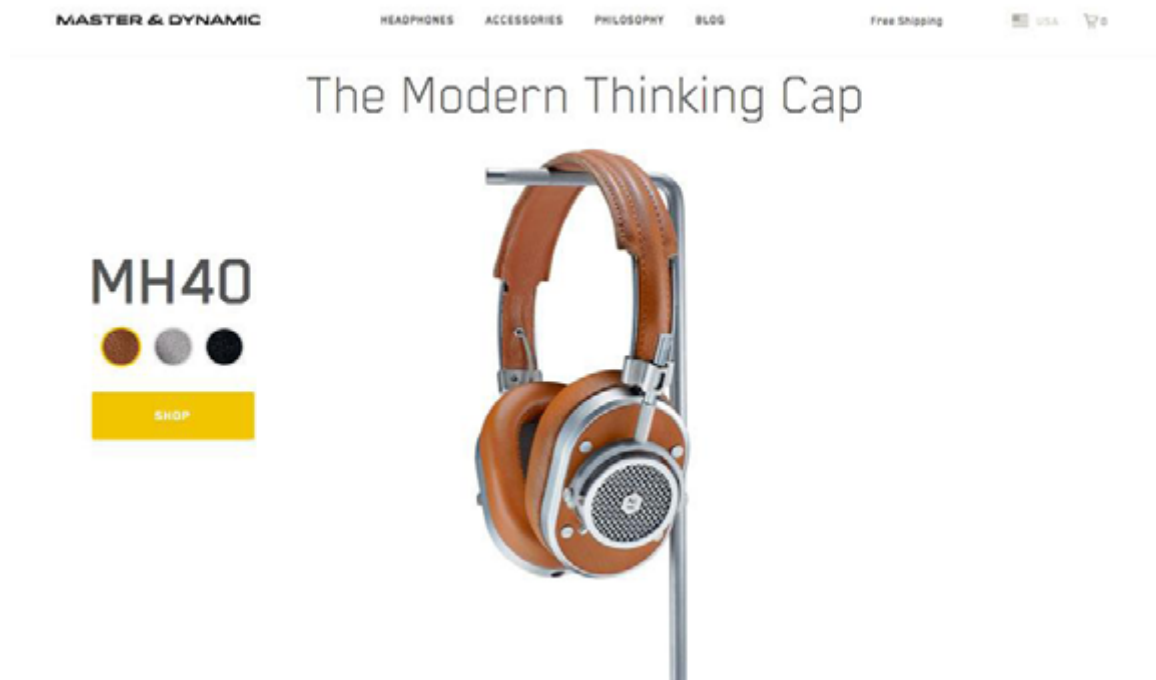


Photo credit: <http://www.masterdynamic.com/>

What's different about the vibrant color trend of 2015 is in its ability to balance fun and professionalism.



Brands now use colors in a strategic way that is lighthearted yet still reliable and trustworthy. Brands are not forgoing their identities to just create a trendy website because designers are using dramatic color in concert with existing elements.

Here are three ways to make it work:

## 1. Backgrounds and text

Vibrant color is a great tool for helping important or key words stand out from the background.

Bright colors, especially against dark backgrounds, provide just the right amount of contrast to draw in the eye. [For the Love of the Reef](#), below, uses color only for “LOVE” and the call to action button, which creates a clever yet subtle association between the two (no doubt intended to improve conversions).

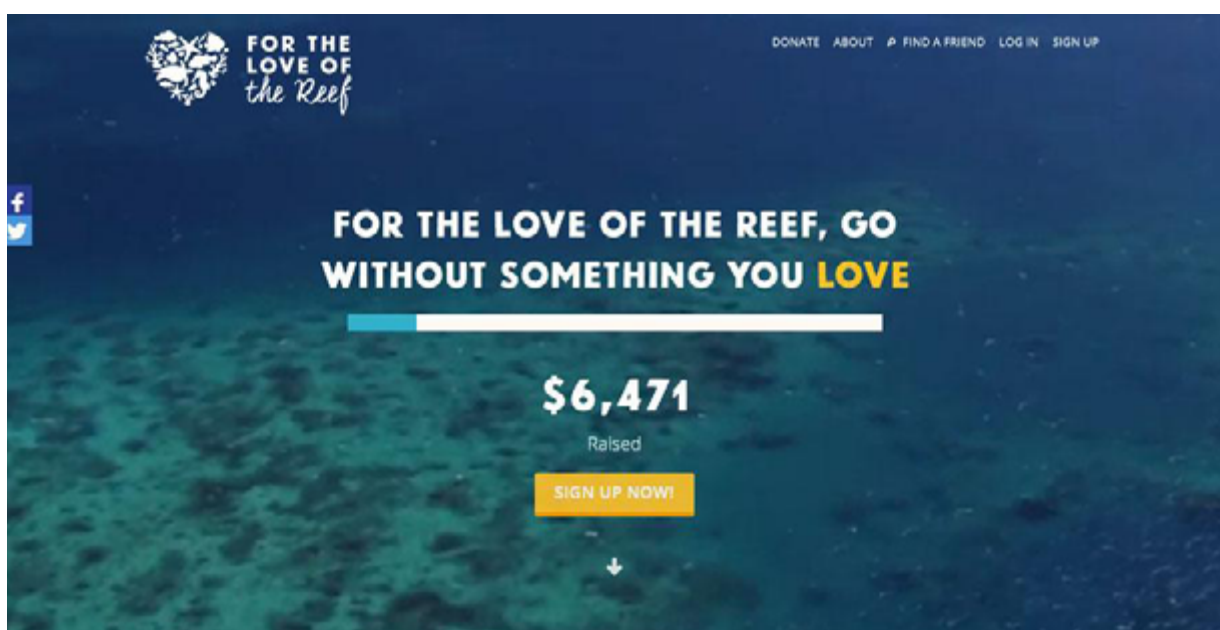


Photo credit: <https://fortheloveof.org.au/#/>

## 2. Buttons and UI elements

Bright color is a fun way to bring attention to buttons and calls to action.

Consider a color that contrasts dramatically with everything else on your site for the most impact. [Mijlo](#), below, does a great job by pairing buttons in bright orange against the product being sold, a cream-colored bag. Everything on the site is muted in color except action elements, making it easy for users to know what they are supposed to do on the site.

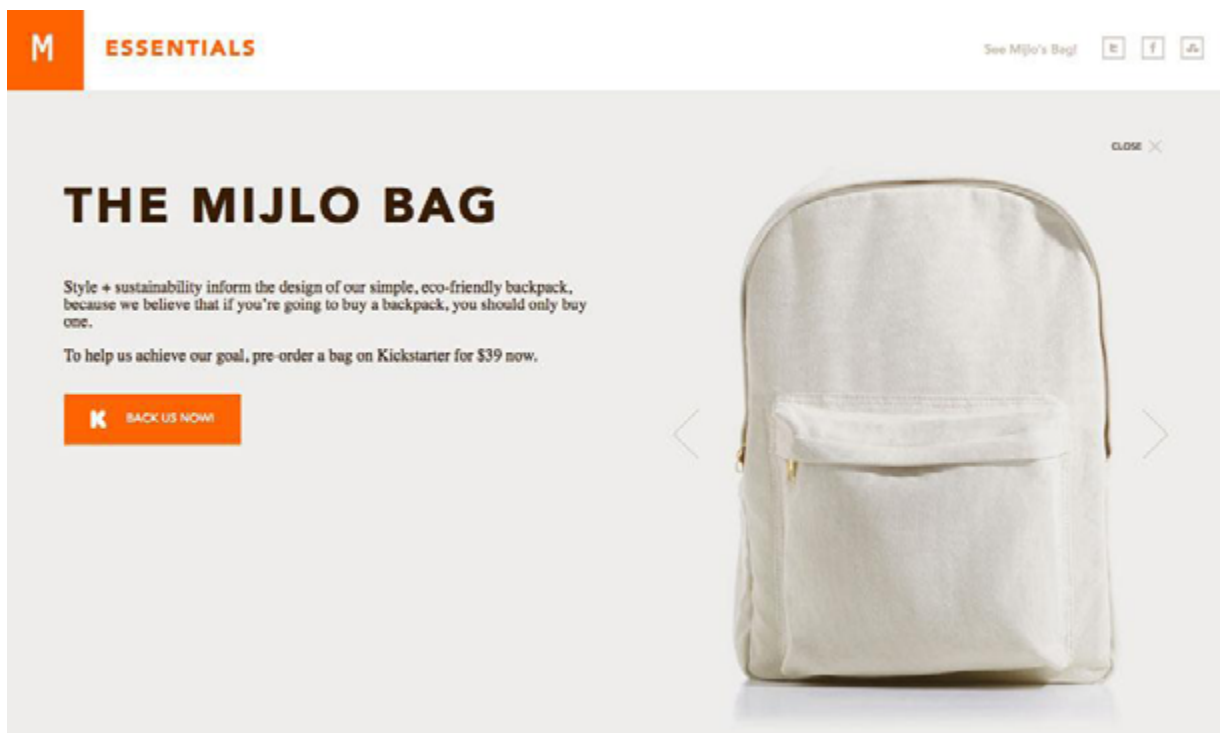


Photo credit: <http://essentials.mijlo.com/>

### 3. Navigation and menus

Color is a great tool when it comes to helping users navigate information-heavy websites. [Colored Lines](#), below, uses rainbow-like colors to highlight navigation through a site which contains a large number of content sections.

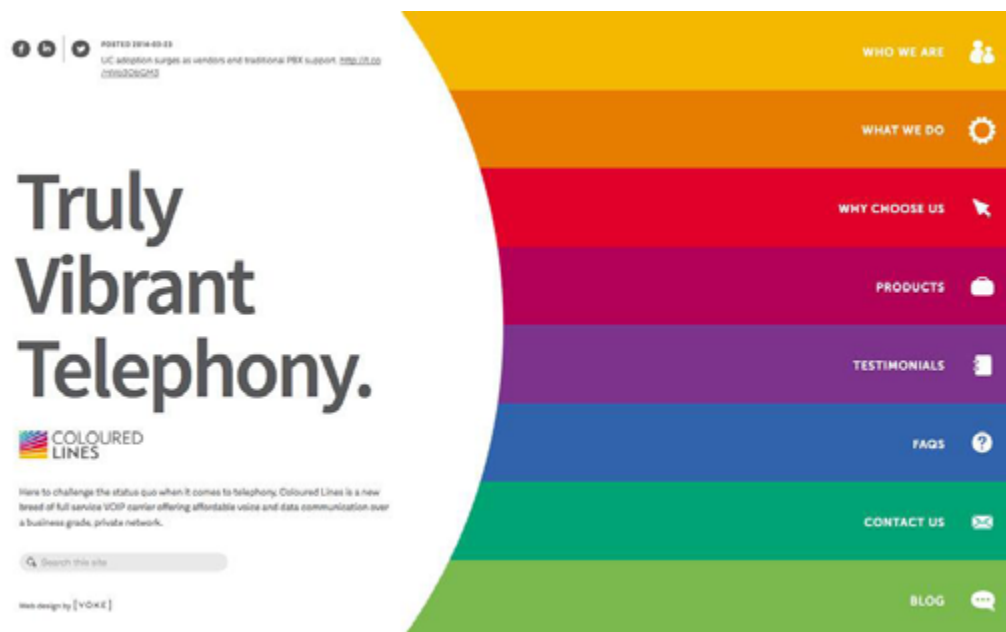


Photo credit: <http://colouredlines.com.au/>

Bright color cues are also popular in [parallax-scrolling effects](#) to create clearly defined sections of content in an otherwise uninterrupted top-down linear flow.

With each color scheme representing a different section, these color guides allow designers to adapt pure-storytelling parallax sites to support more structured content (which is helpful in presenting different calls-to-action without distracting from the narrative power).



## Common Color Associations

When it comes to bold color, it is important to consider a little more than just aesthetics.

Designers need to think about meanings and cultural associations that are connected to certain hues. While these common feelings are not always set in stone, they should be part of the conversation when talking about color for a design project.

Let's examine some of the color associations most commonly found in web design:

**Pink:** Romance, youth, confidence, sensitivity

**Red:** Love, passion, danger, urgency

**Yellow:** Fun, optimism, happiness, caution

**Orange:** Warmth, ambition, enthusiasm, creativity

**Green:** Nature, luck, growth, safety

**Blue:** Harmony, tranquility, trust, honor

**Purple:** Wealth, power, spirituality, calmness

To learn more about the emotional role of color and contrast in web design, check out our free e-book [\*Web Design for the Human Eye\*](#).

## Thinking Beyond 2015

As the overall design trends start to swing back into outlines that are less flat, color will do the same. Bright, bold color will stick around and work more as an element on its own, rather than as a supporting piece of another trend.

Designers will return to using some techniques that have fallen out of fashion (such as gradients) and make them captivating again with bright color.

[The Impossible Bureau](#) (below) does a beautiful job of this. The site pairs a dark, minimal framework with a hover state featuring a bright purple to pink to orange gradient. Expect to see more designers experiment in this way and use bright gradients for user interface elements or as background patterns.

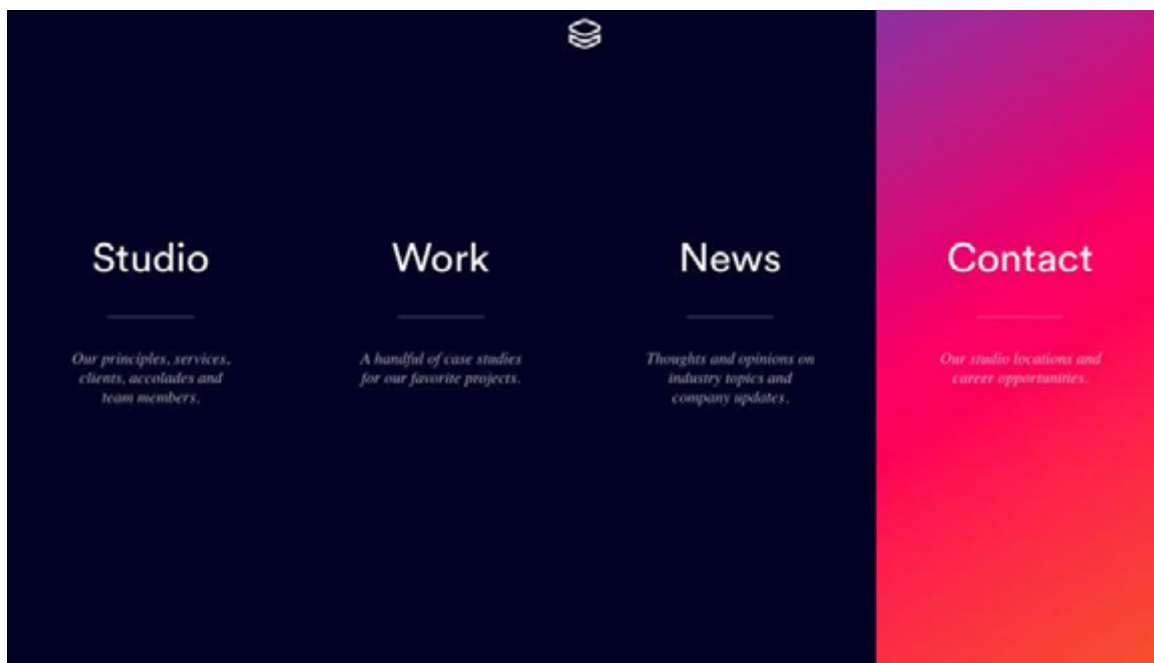


Photo credit: <http://www.impossible-bureau.com/>

[Zample+me](#) (below) uses that same concept with a full-screen bright colored background gradient.

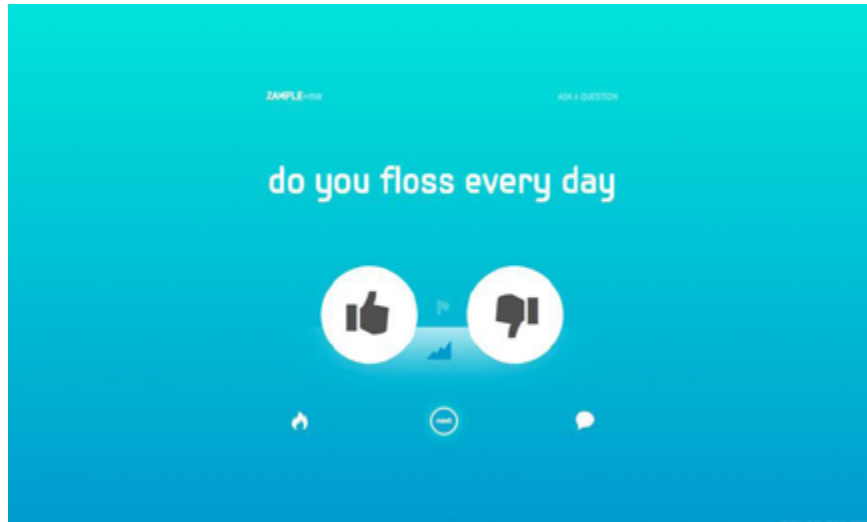


Photo credit: <http://zample.me/do-you-floss-every-day>



Photo credit: <http://www.piccsy.com/everything-design/>

Bold color is already beginning to emerge as the dominant visual for website design. When combined with [bold typography](#), bright color creates a stunning visual for websites that do not feature many images or illustrations. Two simple elements work together to create an even more powerful aesthetic.

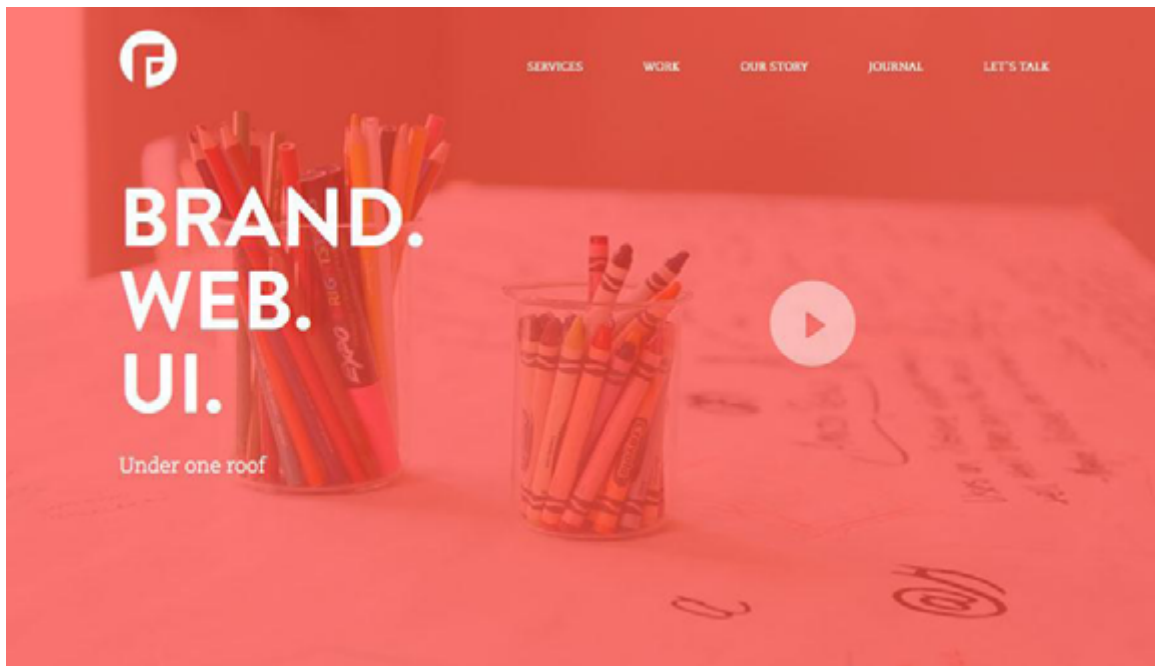


Photo credit: <http://focuslabllc.com/>

Bright color layered over images or video backgrounds is a bold way to have the best of both worlds. Bright color is interesting and creates an emotional connection, while an image or video helps further engage the user.

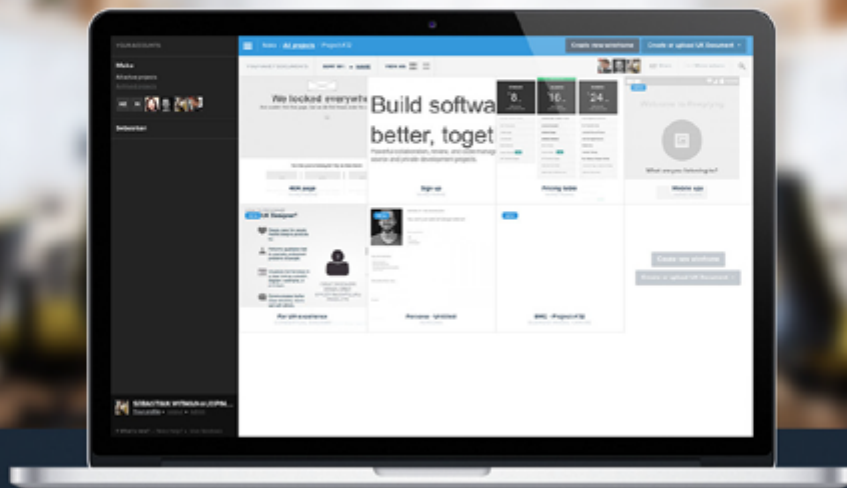
More sites are using this technique, such as [Focus Lab](#), above, and this will only rise in popularity as hi resolution images and vibrant color continue to dominate the web design landscape.

## 10 Free Resources and Tools

1. **Color Wheel Primer:** The color wheel is the starting point for all color theory. This primer, designed for interior design, explains how to expertly think about color.
2. **ColourLovers:** Create color palettes or glean inspiration from other designers.
3. **How to Use CSS Hover Effect in Color:** Create your own nifty hover state with a color change option with a simple tutorial.
4. **Create a Monochromatic Color Scheme:** Adobe Color is one of the most impressive tools out there, including the monochromatic color option. Pick a single color and the tool will help you create a great monochrome palette.
5. **“An Introduction to Color Theory for Web Designers” by Tuts+:** Color theory is more than just creating a great palette. It about pairing hues and readability and understanding and connecting with users. This primer is a great starting point for those looking to expanding their knowledge of color.
6. **Tint UI:** This color picker provides color codes for a variety of hues based on trends, including flat, material and by brand such as Twitter or Microsoft.
7. **Text on Background:** Compare background and text color combinations before you plan your website color palette.

8. **Pantone Color of the Year:** The design world's color authority picks a trendy new color each year and has a ton of other color tools.
9. **How to Add a Hue Filter in Photoshop:** This tutorial helps you create a great color overlay that you can use on images, like some of the ones seen in the examples above.
10. **Color Website Design Gallery from Awwwards:** Using a lot of color can be intimidating. Find some inspiration from this gallery of websites doing it well.

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